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Dear friends,

Jesus never asked "are you a Christian?" before He spent time with someone. Yet, today, many Christians in America live isolated lives, isolated with other followers of Jesus and devoid of anyone that may look, think, act or believe differently. As the reality of that disturbing cultural lifestyle sinks in, I realize why it is easy for the world to look at Christians and think we are narrow minded, judgmental, legalistic, unloving people. Not one of those attributes describes the Jesus I love, trust, follow and seek to look like. If I want the world to know, not just know about, but KNOW the Jesus I am falling more and more in love with, don't I have to be like Him?!

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" Matthew 22:36-48. Friends, Jesus didn't say love other Christians as you love yourself. He said love your neighbor as yourself.

Neighbor – a person who lives close to or near another; a fellow human being.

Last year we watched a documentary called "Craigslist Joe" and God used it to challenge us and open our eyes to this inward circle we Christians create. The summary of this documentary is that Joe decides to do an experiment for 30 days and see if he can live on the kindness of strangers. People all over the country help him, sharing food, giving him a place to lay his head, transporting him, spending time with him and just treating him as they would want to be treated. Yet, not one person who helped Joe professed to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

When the documentary ended, our hearts were sad. We realized the Christians were nowhere to be found. They were off somewhere spending time with other Christians and keeping themselves isolated and protected from the world. While Joe was doing his experiment, Christ followers were probably learning more Bible knowledge, debating theological issues, serving themselves or their kids, running from safe activity to safe activity, and doing everything possible to avoid all the bad things in the world. Well, at least that may be a picture of my family and possibly how we missed out on loving Craigslist Joe.

Read the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Two men walked past him that would have probably been labeled as Christians today, but they failed to stop and love. The outcast Samaritan loved his fellow human and stopped to help, proving to be the one who loved his neighbor as himself. He showed compassion, cleaned the wounds, put his money behind the crisis, sacrificed his time, and promised to return to cover any additional expense. The other two men were religious, but the Samaritan lived like Jesus. What would Jesus do?

Don't misunderstand, I am not here to criticize or judge the Christians. Let's just take me and see the reality of this numbing and real situation.

When I wake up, I open my eyes to suburbia. Our family is safe and isolated, with a fenced in backyard and a cul-de-sac. We only know a handful of our neighbors, and I am using 'know' very loosely here. We know a few neighbors' names. That's it. We don't have our neighbors for dinner or know anything about how they are really doing.

One of our awesome Christian babysitters comes so I can go to work. She takes the kids swimming and they play Legos and watch movies. Every once in a while they may do a little service project, but mostly they serve themselves with slushies and chicken nuggets and do what they want.

When I leave for work, I go to a business that exists to bring God glory. A majority of my co-workers profess Jesus as their Lord and so we can talk freely about Jesus. My office is shared with another Christian who loves Jesus. Sometimes a friend that does not know Jesus may stop by and stand in my door. But, they are coming to me, not me going to them.

We are constantly asking even if we don't say it out loud whether the people we are around, do business with, sit beside at the restaurant are Christians. Is this business owner a Christian? Is my kid's teacher a Christian? What about this restaurant owner? Does my neighbor know Jesus? What about that person that sits beside me in church?

Am I really living like Jesus or am I fooling myself? Why do I always measure who people are and what they believe? Do I look like Jesus or just a self-righteous jerk? Jesus came to love. He came and met people right where they are in the specific moment and just trusted God for the results.

As Christians, we live to inherit the Kingdom of God, prepared for us since the foundation of the world. At the final judgment, the sheep will be separated from the goats. Jesus is the Shepherd. We want to be the sheep. Sheep need a Shepherd.

The King will say, "Come... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." And the King will answer them, "Truly, I sat to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Matthew 25:34-36, 40.

When we die, I hope people do not have to ask whether we were Christians or if we loved Jesus. Please let it be like Matthew 7:16, that by our fruits we will be recognized as followers of Jesus.

Let's quit worrying about whether the people we know are Christians and let's focus on living out the truths of the Bible to look and be like Jesus. Then, Jesus may use us to draw men to Himself.

All for Jesus,

Jenny Waltman

*"And do not forget to do good and to share with others,  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased." - Hebrews 13:16*